



No. 2 Series of 2001  
<http://www.msh.org.ph>

## BRINGING STERILIZATION SERVICES TO THE MAIN HEALTH CENTER

## Background

In the past, the district hospital was the nearest provider of sterilization services for family planning (FP) clients in the municipality of Valencia in Bukidnon Province. Since the district hospital was located in a mountainous area in another municipality, potential clients were discouraged from using voluntary surgical sterilization (VSS) services.

Today, VSS services are available at Valencia's own health center. In July 1999, the municipal health staff, with some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), decided to set up a mini-operating room in the main health center. This was made possible through the joint efforts of the municipality of Valencia and the Department of Health through its Matching Grant Program (MGP).

## The Intervention

Setting up a mini-OR in the main health center supports the goal of the MGP, which is to reduce unmet need for FP by increasing the number of FP acceptors. In line with this effort, the municipal health staff embarked on an information campaign on voluntary sterilization as an option in the FP program. Before the mini-OR's formal opening on 16 June 2000, the health staff participated in the meetings that *barangay* (village) captains organized to disseminate information about voluntary sterilization and the services at the health center. During the community-based monitoring and information system survey, volunteer health workers also informed and educated men and women about voluntary sterilization as an option.

Funds for setting up the mini-OR were provided by the Local Government Unit (LGU), P40,000 (US\$800) from the health budget and P60,000 (US\$1,200) from the Local



Government Support Equalization Fund. The municipality of Valencia provides funds for drugs. In addition, P175,000 (US\$3,500) was allocated from the MGP to cover the costs of supplies and instruments and the surgeon's fee. The cost of drugs and supplies is about P780 (US\$16) per client for voluntary female sterilization (VFS) and P365 (US\$7) for vasectomy. The surgeon receives an honorarium of P150 (US\$3) per client. With the MGP grant also comes a package of technical assistance from the Department of Health, primarily through Management Sciences for Health (MSH).

## How It Works

VSS services are available from Tuesday to Friday at Valencia's main health center. A team led by Dr. Ismael Naypa, Jr., a private practitioner and former Chief of Surgery of the Bukidnon Provincial Hospital, provides the services. The health center midwife counsels potential clients, while the public health nurse takes care of the scheduling of patients. Patients from neighboring barangays are usually scheduled on the same day to facilitate the transport of patients from the health center to their respective homes.



# MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

## Department of Health

Providing transport to clients is a means of encouraging them to use the service. When no vehicle is available, female voluntary sterilization clients, particularly indigent clients, are given transportation allowances.

## Outcomes/Future Plans

Since the mini-OR's opening in June 2000, the main health center of Valencia, Bukidnon, has served 102 clients for BTL and 7 for vasectomy. This is a significant contribution to the municipality's FP program, considering that only 1 male and 42 female sterilizations were performed in 1999 at the district hospital in San Fernando. From January to June 2000, 88 women had BTL but 42 of these were clients of Marie Stopes International.

Currently, VSS services are available only to Valencia residents. However, the main health center is considering making its services available to neighboring municipalities in the near future through mutually agreed-upon cost-sharing schemes. Meanwhile, the surgeon is willing to offer his services to interested municipalities to train their doctors in standard procedures. The vision is for Valencia's main health center to become a center for training on VSS for other municipalities in the province that wish to set up similar facilities.

Voluntary female sterilization in Bukidnon Province is expected to increase, thus improving the sterilization rate for the region as a whole. According to the 1998 National Demographic and Health Survey, only 5.2% of currently married women in the Northern Mindanao Region, where the province is located, obtained a contraceptive sterilization. This is far below the national average of 10.3%. The survey showed that voluntary female sterilization is the preferred contraceptive method in the Philippines.

## Lessons Learned

For any major health undertaking requiring substantial financial resources, it is important to enlist the support of the LGU. This requires intensive and sustained advocacy efforts to enable local leaders to understand and appreciate the benefits of the intervention to the community. In the case of Valencia, the Municipal Health Officers took the initiative to discuss the idea of a mini-OR in their main health center with the Office of the Mayor and the Local Health Board.



Information, education, and communication are also vital in ensuring the success of any intervention. In the case of voluntary sterilization, it is important to create a cadre of client-educators to correct any misconceptions that couples may have about the method.

Finally, the LGU has to establish close collaboration with the private sector and the NGOs for the provision of essential health services. The LGU should continuously be on the lookout for possible "champions" or partners who are willing to commit their time and efforts for the benefit of their community.

This publication was made possible through support provided by the U. S. Agency for International Development, under the terms of Contract No. 492-0480-C-00-5093-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S Agency for International Development.

### Please address all inquiries to:

**Management Sciences for Health**  
Unit TN No.4, 10/F Times Plaza Building  
U.N. Ave cor Taft Ave, Ermita, Manila, Philippines  
Tel. Nos: (632) 525-7145/52/56 Fax No.: (632) 525-6086  
E-mail: info@msh.org.ph